COMMON FAULTS IN TEACHING CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF MENTAL SCIENCE.

(An Address delivered before the College of Preceptors, London, by the Rev. Canon Daniel, M.A.)

THE critic who proposes to speak of common faults in teaching has no lack of matter to complain of, for it is difficult to move a step in education without committing some fault or other. We may, for instance, teach a subject, but not the child, or a child, and not the subject; we may teach the right class of subjects in wrong ways, or the wrong class of subjects in right ways; we may do too much for our pupils or too little; we may teach the class, as a whole, and not the individual, or the individual and not the class; we may attempt too much or too little; we may use a method, suitable at one stage of development, in teaching children who are passing through a very different stage; we may cultivate one side of a child's mind at the expense of another; we may, in short, commit mistakes in teaching anywhere and everywhere.

Now, there are various ways in which we may avoid mistakes. We may follow what appear to be the best examples. It has not been left for us to discover the whole of the secrets of education. Education is one of the oldest of the arts, if not of the sciences, and the experience of the world has taught us that certain methods of instruction are more successful than others. We may stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, and, while avoiding their blunders, appropriate their discoveries. Hence the enormous importance to the would-be teacher of studying the history of education, and of serving an apprenticeship in some school where he may at once enter upon the possession of the highest form to which the art of education has been brought.

But there is something more wanted than good models, and that is an intelligent comprehension of the principles on which successful education, whatever be its methods, depends. Without such a comprehension we are liable to rob the best methods of much of their value, through the mechanical way in which, regardless of varying circumstances, we apply them; and we shall be unable, except by accident, to improve on the practice of our predecessors. I need hardly say that the extent to which intelligence is brought to bear upon education makes a vast difference not only in its results, but in the character of the work itself. The dullest subject and the dullest child become interesting when the higher powers of the mind are set to work to make the subject interesting and the child acute.

Now, what are the principles by which the teacher must be guided? I know of none that do not rest upon the laws of body and mind. We must conquer nature by obeying her. We cannot teach *what* we like, but only what a child is capable of assimilating. We cannot teach *how* we like, but only as nature will allow us to teach. In other words, all our methods are conditioned by what a child is, and a knowledge of child nature is indispensable to intelligent education. I do not propose, in the short time at my disposal, to attempt any general survey of the laws of mind, but I will single out a few here and